

Touring Holidays in Sri Lanka



Highlights of Sri Lanka Touring Holiday



www.expressionsholidays.co.uk
01392 441224

Highlights of Sri Lanka

6 NIGHTS / 7 DAYS

Cultural Triangle

Kandy

Tea Country

Colombo



Sigiriya Rock Fortress

For those with limited time or for those who want an introduction to the country, our Highlights of Sri Lanka tour visits the key places in the Cultural Triangle, Kandy, Tea Country, and Colombo, and gives you an insight into this fascinating country. Visit such memorable historic sites as the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, the medieval capital of Sri Lanka, Polonnaruwa, and the cave temples of Dambulla. Then, move on to the gardens and bustling centre of Kandy, the lush and rolling tea plantations of the south, and the waterfalls of the national parks. Spend your final night amongst the bustling cultural city of Colombo, but consider then extending your holiday with some time on the beach in the south west or in the historic fort of Galle.

ABOUT THIS TOUR

This holiday can be undertaken staying in a range of hotels. To make things simple initially we are giving a Luxury option and a Value option. Each combination is based on tried and tested hotels within given price ranges but any other hotels we feature in the respective regions can be included instead and of course, Luxury and Value hotels can be mixed.

PRICES

From £2,090 per person

Based on double occupancy in our 'value' option hotels, with flights to and from Colombo, and private chauffeur-guide.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights with Sri Lankan Airways from London Heathrow to Bandaranaike International Airport and back
- Entrance fees to the sites and monuments listed in the itinerary (optional excursions are charged at a supplement)
- Private English-speaking chauffeur-guide in an air-conditioned Japanese car for duration
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Sigiriya or Habarana
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Kandy
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in Ambewela or Nuwara Eliya
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in Colombo

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Visa
- Meals and drinks, unless specified
- Personal travel insurance
- Any additional nights

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Cultural Triangle - Kandy - Tea Country - Colombo

Expressions

Day one: Arrive in Colombo

Arrive in Colombo and meet your personal chauffeur guide who will be your travelling companion throughout your tour of Sri Lanka. You drive inland to the Cultural Triangle (approximately 4.5 hours' drive). The Cultural Triangle is a melting pot of heritage, culture and wildlife and home to a wealth of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Four of Sri Lanka's eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites can be found in the Cultural Triangle, telling a captivating story of Sri Lankan civilisation.

Day two: Visit Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa

This morning you visit Sigiriya Rock Fortress, one of Sri Lanka's eight World Heritage Sites. The 5th Century Sigiriya Rock Fortress is one of the island's most awe-inspiring archaeological sites and is a prime tourist location. This 'Fortress in the sky' is perhaps the most fantastic single wonder on the island. It is also known as Lion Rock because of the huge lion that used to stand at the entrance to the Palace on the summit of the 600ft high rock. For just two decades in the 5th Century AD, King Kashyapa set up his capital here at Sigiriya. His creation was a remarkable feat of engineering and a true work of art. To fully appreciate Sigiriya, it is worth climbing up the steep steps to the summit. In the afternoon, continue for Polonnaruwa via Habarana, Minneriya and Giritala. Passing through Minneriya National Park, it is likely that you will see wild elephants, sometimes in large herds. This is the site of the 'Elephant Gathering' between July and October; where up to 300 elephants can be seen gathering around the tank in the late afternoon. Polonnaruwa is another World Heritage Site and contains the well-preserved monuments of the mediaeval capital of Sri Lanka, located amongst undulating woodland. The well-preserved ruins of Polonnaruwa tell a story of Buddhism, royalty, kinship, war and power and provide you with the opportunity to experience the grandeur of this period and marvel at the artistry of the island's early craftsmen.

Day three: Sigiriya to Kandy

After breakfast, visit Dambulla, another World Heritage Site and home to marvellous cave temples whose walls are covered with murals exceeding 21,000 square feet. This visit involves a 10-15 minute walk uphill with wonderful views at the top. The caves of Dambulla are home to a wealth of history, most notably sheltering King Walagamba during his fourteen years of exile. Once he had regained his throne, he built the most magnificent rock temples to be found anywhere on the island. Then you will head



Peradeniya Gardens, Kandy

south towards Sri Lanka's spectacular hill country. On the way pause to visit a famous spice garden and to see some of the island's best batiks at an authentic arts and crafts centre where there is the option of a rice and curry lunch (Sigiriya to Kandy is approximately 3 hours' drive). Spend the afternoon at your leisure exploring Kandy, the royal capital of Hill Country. In central Kandy, British legacies remain in a few grand old buildings and hotels. There is also a lively market and numerous shops and arts and crafts workshops.

Optional: Evening of contemporary art.

If you choose this excursion you visit local artist, Rahju, at his hillside cottage near Kandy, and enjoy a 2 hour experience of Rahju's spectacular paintings. He will give you a private viewing of his collection, where his life story, his inspirations, his ideologies and philosophies are illustrated. Rahju and his equally talented daughter Rudrani will discuss their works with you over tea and show you around their studio, giving you a glimpse into life of a truly talented Sri Lankan artist.

Day four: Kandy, Botanical Gardens, and Elephants

Today you will have a number of excursions around Kandy, the last capital of the Sinhalese kingdom. Today Kandy is still an important cultural and spiritual centre and an absolutely must see on your visit to Sri Lanka. The centre of town is close to a picturesque lake and is a delight of antique and gemstone shops, a bustling market and numerous restaurants. You will pay a visit to the Royal Botanical

Garden at Peradeniya, Sri Lanka's largest and finest gardens. Originally established as a pleasure garden for Kandyan nobility, the British transformed it into botanical gardens in 1821, laying the foundations for what it has become today. The gardens contain more than 5,000 different species, including over 150 palm trees, and highlights include the huge Javan Fig and the orchard house. You will then visit Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage, (approximately 1 hour's drive), a government-run orphanage. You will see more than 65 elephants, including baby elephants born in captivity. The best time to see them is at feeding time and bathing time in the river. In the evening, join the crowds to visit Kandy's famous Temple of the Tooth located within the Royal Palace complex. This is one of the most sacred sites for Buddhists, containing the tooth relic of Lord Buddha.

Optional: Kandy architectural walk

This architectural walk starts at 08.30 hrs and gives you a fantastic insight into ancient Kandy and its architecture while also experiencing local lifestyles with visits to open air markets and trying local produce and street food! Your guide, a qualified architect, will take you through the town, showing you landmarks of significant architectural, historical and spiritual interest. You will make a visit to a Temple and are advised to take appropriate clothing for this.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Cultural Triangle - Kandy - Tea Country - Colombo

Expressions

Day five: Kandy to Tea Country

After breakfast leave for Nuwara Eliya (approximately 2 hours). Today's drive is one of the most scenic in the country as you pass through tea country with the mountains carpeted in tea, numerous waterfalls and tea pickers. Stop at a tea factory to see the processing and taste some of Sri Lanka's famous tea. The hill town of Nuwara Eliya is the centre of 'Little England', with British influences clear throughout the town. In this quirky market town, enjoy a stroll in Victoria Park, wander alongside ponies on the 'high street' and enjoy strawberries and cream from the local market gardens.

Optional: Take the train with observation coach from Kandy to Tea Country

A leisurely way of experiencing the scenery is to take the train travelling in the first class observation coach from Peradeniya to Nanu Oya (for Nuwara Eliya). The train leaves at 12.30 and arrives at 15.50.

Day six: Tea Country to Colombo

After breakfast you will be driven to Colombo (approximately 6 hours). The tea plantation scenery continues this morning and includes two very high waterfalls, the St Clair and the Devon. There is a stop at the Tea Centre for a cup of tea chosen from more than 100 different blends. At Kitulgala see the location of the Bridge over the River Kwai and tropical rainforest.

Optional: Colombo City Walk

Once you have arrived in Colombo, you will have the chance to go on a guided personalised city walk through Colombo. This evening you will spend 3-4 hours exploring this fine city at dusk. You will be shown all the lesser known parts of Colombo; the secret alcoves, the historical landmarks, the fantastic architecture and Colombo's beginnings as a tiny trading port.

Day seven: Colombo to return home

After breakfast, you will be collected for the return transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

OPTIONAL

It is possible to add extra nights in the south west of Sri Lanka, perhaps in Bentota, or in the south, in Galle.



Tea plantations

HOTELS

Our 'value' selection of hotels in the Cultural Triangle, Kandy, Tea Country, and Colombo are described below.

Expressions

HABARANA, CULTURAL TRIANGLE

Habarana Village

Enjoying a rural location, Habarana Village sits amidst 27 acres of lush vegetation bordering Lake Habarana. The accommodation is found in cottages that nestle amongst the gardens of shady fruit trees. The cottages were inspired by the local thatched roofed huts and have an authentic feel. Other natural, local touches include bamboo and cloth window screens, cement floors, and private open baths and showers. The open-air living allows for complete harmony with the setting, listening to bird song and for enjoying the lake vista. An open lounge bar serves refreshing cocktails and fresh fruit juices, whilst the Panthaliya coffee shop next door serves snacks and hot drinks. Dining is in the El Hena restaurant, which is spacious and open, with a view of the pool, garden, and lake on one side and a view of the chefs at work in the kitchen on the other. Western and local dishes are served. Romantic dinners can be had by the lake, in a tree-hut, under the shade of a tree, or in the privacy of the veranda. Your time here can be spent not just sight-seeing, but enjoying nature walks, Ayurvedic spa treatments, elephant riding, and joining local fisherman. [read more](#)

KANDY

Mahaweli Reach

On the banks of the mighty Mahaweli River, 5km from the centre of Kandy, lies Mahaweli Reach, the first hotel in the Hill capital to obtain a five star rating from the Sri Lanka Tourist Board. This well-established hotel is popular with tour groups and Sri Lankans splashing out on family gatherings, weddings, and honeymoons. The landscaped gardens are bursting with tropical colour, centred around an enticing swimming pool. The restaurant serves international dishes and Sri Lankan specialities such as breadfruit, jackfruit, and spinach curries. After a day's sightseeing around Kandy, relax with a soothing Ayurvedic massage or a drink at the pool bar, ready for the live bands and cultural shows that are regular evening features at the hotel. The 108 deluxe rooms are spacious and very good value, the four suites providing additional luxury. [read more](#)



Mahaweli Reach, Kandy

NUWARA ELIYA, TEA COUNTRY

Jetwing St Andrews

Jetwing St. Andrew's is a 52-room hotel offering old world charm in Nuwara Eliya. The 100-year-old stately mansion at the heart of the building retains its patterned-tile floors and colonial décor. Comfortable and refined bedrooms populate the wings. Whilst Nuwara Eliya enjoys warm temperatures during the day, the night temperatures can drop, so a roaring fire is lit in the hotel lounge. The Old Course restaurant at Jetwing St. Andrew's has a walk-in wine cellar and a show kitchen where you can watch chefs preparing your meal. High tea is served on the terrace, comprised of the hotel's fine tea collection. Set in sloping grounds, the hotel has its own terraced vegetable garden, a few goats and cows, as well as a model wetland supporting dragonflies and treefrogs. This is an ideal base for enjoying the surrounding hill country. You can walk into town for the market, racecourse, roaming ponies, and quirky shops, or play golf at the scenic Nuwara Eliya Golf course, whose fairways can be seen from the hotel. [read more](#)

[read more](#)

COLOMBO

Zylan Luxury Villa

Its name literally meaning 'blossoming', Zylan Luxury Villa is an elegant boutique hotel set among the residential properties of Colombo. To the west of the city centre, between the Viharamahadevi Park and Royal Colombo Golf Club, this hotel offers a laidback ambience. Step off the streets, past the fish pond and into a light and airy reception area, complete with colour scheme of muted coffee and cream, paired with wooden touches. Vast windows open up from here, inviting you outside to the decorative garden area and shaded terrace. An intimate rooftop terrace also sits on the second floor, where international cuisine is served, set against the deep red and mustard yellow of the hotel's walls. A further terrace space is home to a small pool and solarium, which are privileged additions for a Colombo hotel. The luxurious guestrooms vary between two categories; each of the 10 rooms ensures comfort and privacy, while the interior design promotes light and space with white walls and colourful fabrics. [read more](#)



Jetwing St Andrews, Nuwara Eliya



Habarana Village, Habarana



Zylan Luxury Villa, Colombo

HOTELS

Our 'luxury' selection of hotels in the Cultural Triangle, Kandy, Tea Country, and Colombo are described below.

Expressions

SIGIRYA, CULTURAL TRIANGLE

Jetwing Vil Uyana

Jetwing Vil Uyana was inspired by local and rural traditions, designed to bring nature alongside the luxury amenities of a hotel. The 25 individual 'dwellings' at Jetwing Vil Uyana have been discreetly placed in and around a wetland system with reed beds, rice fields, and lakes, making it a haven for wildlife. Four different room types are offered: some 'dwellings' are built over the paddy fields or the marsh, others over the water, and some in the forest. All rooms make use of natural materials and draw upon local styles. Most have their own plunge pool and wooden deck. Guests can choose to dine under the stars, in the privacy of their own room, or in one of the two restaurants. The Island Spa and yoga pavilion provide calming surroundings in which to relax with a treatment or class. Specialist Ayurvedic treatments are administered in a separate pavilion in the grounds. A range of excursions are possible, to the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, on elephant safaris, Loris watching, or to the local village. Jetwing Vil Uyana combines luxurious surroundings with a real commitment to the local environment and its people. [read more](#)



Jetwing Vil Uyana, Sigiriya

flavours. The Kandy House is also well situated for excursions to Kandy and the scenic highlands, visiting temples, tea estates and nature reserves. [read more](#)

villages, waterfalls, monasteries, the Horton Plains or Hakgala Botanical Gardens. [read more](#)

KANDY

The Kandy House

The Kandy House is a hidden gem; a beautiful Wallawwa mansion set in tropical surroundings, 4 miles from the centre of the cultural capital, Kandy. As you approach, wrought iron gates open to reveal a tear-shaped lawn and wide arches and pillars under a steep-pitched terracotta roof. Built in 1804 by Ratwatte Adigar, the Kandy House has been sensitively restored by Channa Daswatte, a student of Bawa, to blend Kandyan architecture with Dutch colonial furniture and modern design. Most of the rooms centre around the serene inner courtyard, central to the Wallawwa design. The 8 rooms take their names from butterflies endemic to the Kandy foothills. Two of the more spacious Ultra deluxe rooms open onto a verandah that traces around the house. The chefs serve fusion cuisine, blending traditional Sri Lankan ingredients with international



Kandy House, Kandy

AMBEWELA, TEA COUNTRY

Jetwing Warwick Gardens

Jetwing Warwick Gardens lies amidst majestic mountains and tea-clad slopes. Set in 29 acres of grounds, with its own organic farm and tea estate, this unique Edwardian style Estate was once the dwelling of a Scottish tea planter. Beautifully restored to reflect its original charm, Warwick Gardens has 5 bedrooms, a library, TV room, dining room, and a magnificent drawing room leading out into the garden. Rich interiors are filled with soft rugs and chandeliers, oak furniture and floorboards, and roaring fireplaces. All the bedrooms are spacious, the Master bedroom offering extra space and an amazing view to Uva Gap. The staff make full use of the organic foods produced on the estate and fresh milk comes daily from Daisy, resident cow. Spend your days exploring this mountainous region, with its tea estates and factories, hilltop



Jetwing Warwick Gardens, Ambewela

COLOMBO

The Regency at the Galle Face Hotel

The Galle Face Hotel dates back to 1864 and has been owned and run by the Gardiner family for over 60 years. Its position facing the Indian Ocean on one side and Galle Face Green Park on the other gives this magnificent colonial hotel a resort feel. A high tea on the verandah or cocktails on the chess-board terrace at sunset are on the 'must-do' list for any first-timer to Colombo. There are nine places to eat, including a tea room, seafood restaurant, and a pub. The seawater swimming pool and the Regency Spa are ideal for relaxing after sightseeing. The Regency at the Galle Face Hotel itself was opened after restoration in 2004. The bedrooms in The Regency are luxuriously fitted with elegant furniture, whilst still retaining original features such as polished wooden floors and high ceilings. The Oceanic suites look directly onto the sea. [read more](#)



The Regency at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo

MAP OF HIGHLIGHTS OF SRI LANKA TOURING HOLIDAY



The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This touring holiday is one of several suggested holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want, including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one location too, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

The logo for Expressions Holidays, featuring the word "Expressions" in a white, elegant cursive font on a dark blue rectangular background.

OUR TOURS

Our touring holidays are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group, but are escorted by your own private English-speaking chauffeur-guide.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of flights and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

Sri Lankan Airways operates daily flights to Colombo from London Heathrow. Most flights leave London in the afternoon or evening. Flight time is about 11 hours. There is economy and a business class cabin. In recent years, the business class cabins have been upgraded to fully reclining flat-beds. From Colombo you can also take the Sri Lankan air taxi to regional centres throughout the country. Sri Lankan Airways also operates flights to the Maldives via Colombo, making Sri Lanka and the Maldives a perfect two-centre combination.

TRAVEL WITHIN SRI LANKA

We include private transfers with all our holidays to Sri Lanka, and a personal chauffeur with all our touring holidays. Your English-speaking chauffeur-guide will meet you on arrival at Colombo airport, then accompany you on your journey around the island. All our holidays are for individuals, so you travel as your own party and do not join a group. It is also possible to hire a car in Sri Lanka, which can be arranged locally or in advance. A more popular option is to hire a car with driver for day trips or excursions, which, again, can be arranged by us in advance or by the hotel locally.

TOURING HOLIDAYS

A touring holiday of Sri Lanka is at the heart of what many of our clients want to experience from this fascinating country, and it is where we excel at using our personal knowledge and experience to tailor a holiday that is a perfect match for you. Stay in several different locations around Sri Lanka, allowing time to explore and relax in each. Combine a few nights on the beach with stays in the Kandy Hills, in the Cultural Triangle, on a high tea estate or in a national wildlife park, in Galle, Negombo, or Colombo. It makes sense to factor in a night or two in Colombo, Negombo, Wadduwa, or at the Wallawwa near the airport, at the beginning and/or end of your holiday to coincide with flight times.

REGIONS OF SRI LANKA

Roughly only half the size of England, yet packed with a whole continent's worth of temples, ruins, wildlife reserves, and luxury beach resorts, Sri Lanka is a beautiful, bite-sized slice of paradise offering a whole world of diverse escapes. Littered with elegant colonial hotels and enchanting boutique lodges, Sri Lanka also offers luxury at a relative snip. Young or old, family or couple, beach-bound or culture-vulture – a visit to Sri Lanka satisfies everyone. Formerly an Arab trading port, the commercial capital Colombo is a bustling, colourful town, with a fabulous bazaar, colonial churches, and craft markets. To the north of Colombo lies Negombo and the beaches of the west coast, whilst to the south Wadduwa is the start of a string of fabulous beaches running all the way down and around Sri Lanka's southwest coast, with a collection of intimate, exquisite beach resorts. Further southward lies historic Galle, a reminder of the Dutch presence on the island. Inviting as Sri Lanka's coastline is, however, the island's interior is worth the airfare alone, with forest parks sheltering leopards and wild Asian elephants, a verdant hill country carpeted in tea plantations with lovely boutique planter's house hotels, and no visitor to Sri Lanka should be allowed to miss the Cultural Triangle, boasting five UNESCO World Heritage Sites in an area no bigger than Kent. New to tourism is the north and north east of Sri Lanka, strewn with Hindu temples, colonial gems and long white beaches offering spectacular snorkelling.

THINGS TO SEE IN SRI LANKA

Cricket is a national sport, played on every dusty maidan and patch of grass from Jaffna to Galle. A real highlight of any trip to the south is Galle Fort, where you can wander round the ancient ramparts at sunset, watching cricket games below, or stroll along the narrow streets in search of antiques in tiny, friendly shops. Local festivals such as Vesak full moon in May and Poson full moon in July, as well as the famous Esala Festival in Kandy in July and August, when Buddha's tooth is taken out from the temple and paraded through the streets. Visiting national parks, sheltering an abundance of wildlife including leopards, elephants, bears and hundreds of species of birds. Buying tea, gems, jewellery, spices for a local bazaar. Fantastic spicy local cuisine, specialising in fish dishes, and delicious 'egg hoppers.' Tea-tasting in the hill country. Sigiriya Rock Fortress. The Cave temples of Dambulla. The medieval capital and ruins of Polonnaruwa. The sacred city of Anuradhapura. The west coast beaches flanked by palm trees, including Negombo, Beruwela, Bentota and Galle. The elephant orphanage at Pinnawela. The tea plantations near Nuwara Eliya, a region known locally as Little England. Ayurvedic massage. A warm welcome wherever you go.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, flight and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

PRICE INFORMATION IN MORE DETAIL

Scheduled return flights from London Heathrow to Bandaranaike International Airport with Sri Lanka Airways and accommodation at 'value' hotels (e.g. Habarana Village, Mahaweli Reach, Jetwing St Andrews, and Zylan Luxury Villa).
From £2,090 per person.

Scheduled return flights from London Heathrow to Bandaranaike International Airport with Sri Lankan Airways and accommodation at 'luxury' hotels (e.g. Jetwing Vil Uyana, Kandy House, Jetwing Warwick Gardens, and the Regency at the Galle Face Hotel).
From £2,390 per person.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators) and ABTA.



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HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441224

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. No handling fee is charged on deposits up to £1000. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking and will depend on the ticketing deadlines involved in your booking.